

(39)

The True Interest of the Legal
English PROTESTANTS,

STATED IN A

LETTER

TO A

Present Member of the *House of Commons*

Concerning the

TEST.

SIR,

IF you look round about you ; you will find the greatest part of the Nation to have been your Bloody Devouring Enemies : The visible Reasons, have been the Actings of the Bishops in *Scotland*, and the *High Commission Court* in *England* : But the chief Reason of taking this pretence, was the Avarice of your Enemies to Usurp Church-Lands : Which Interest (as it hath ever continued their Conspiracies since) must always make them remain your *Solemnly Leagued, and unalterable Enemies* ; though perhaps your present Flatterers. And you have no Reversionary prospect to comfort you ; for the next Heir now living, is Invi-roned with *Presbyterian Instructors*.

But the present King, (mindful of your past Loyalty,) hath Promis'd, and Perform'd the Protection of you, for two years together, without withdrawing so much as His Family-Chappel at *Whitehall* from you : And His Clemency and Compassion no less perseveres, in Protecting and Cherishing those Contenders with Kings, the *French Hugonots* : So that His *Protestant Friends* can have no motive to doubt Him, whom they can only Trust, if they Disoblige him not.

But if the Coersive Power must be continued over the *Sectaries*, though it begun all our Miseries ; and the *Penal Laws*, with the *Tests*, must remain, to drive all sorts of *Non-conformists* to *Hypocrisy* ; you will find that those whom you would still be Threatning without Power, will take new measures to destroy your future Power. I say not this, that I would have all sorts of *Rebellions Sectaries* have Liberty to meet in what Numbers and Places they please ; but would have new Acts (if there be not enough) to give the Civil Magistrate a sufficient preventing Power of such Temptations to Rebellion. But I would have the *Protestant Church* freed from the blemish of being Tyrants over Mens Souls ; their Churches, Revenues, and such a Pastoral Power as Christ and his Apostles Exercis'd, being continued upon

upon them. I mean a Power to Preach, Teach, and Excommunicate all Church-Disturbers.

And now since the *Test-Acts* have made a great noise in the World ; I shall presume to offer some Proofs out of an Allowed *Protestant Bible* of the Unlawfulness of them.

And to begin with the Act of the 25th. of King *Charles* the Second, the words of the Engagement are these.

I A. B. do declare, that I do Believe that there is not any Transubstantiation in the Lords-Supper, or in the Elements of Bread and Wine, at, or after the Consecration thereof, by any person whatsoever.

And in the second Act of the 30th. of King *Charles* the Second, there is added, **The renouncing the Invocation of the Virgin Mary, or any of the Saints, as Idolatrous ; as also the Mass as it is now used by the Church of Rome, is declar'd Idolatrous.**

But the *Protestant Bible* is positive in these Words, *St. Matthew* Chap. 26. ver. 26.

And as they were Eating, Jesus took Bread, and Blessed it, and Brake it, and gave it to the Disciples, and said, Take, Eat, this is my Body.

And in *St. Mark* Chap. 14. ver. 22.

And as they did Eat, Jesus took Bread, and Blessed it, and Brake it, and gave it to them, and said, Take, Eat, this is my Body.

And in *St. Luke* Chap. 22. ver. 19.

And he took Bread, and gave Thanks, and Brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my Body which is given for you, this do in Remembrance of me.

And in the Verses immediately following these three Texts, *Christ* calls the Cup of Wine, *His Blood, shed for his Followers* : But I omitted them for Brevity sake.

Now I would ask you, whether the plain Words in the *Test-Acts*, are not expressly that I believe not one of these Texts of *Christ* ?

And to give you yet a plainer Text out of *St. John* Chap. 6. ver. 51. You will find these words in your own *Bible*.

I am the Living Bread, which came down from Heaven, if any Man Eat this Bread he shall live for ever.

And the Bread that I will give is my Flesh, which I will give for the Life of the World.

Consider now Sir, Whether the Engagements in these *Test-Acts*, are not a Solemn League against the Word of God, so plain in four Texts ; and a confounding Snare to those that cannot Read and Understand, as well as to those that can ; for they engage to they know not what : Nor do I know one contrary Text.

As for the Miracle of *Transubstantiation*, which the *Test-takers* think so hard, God hath Impower'd Man and Beast to demonststrate it daily to them : For the chief sorts of Beasts do daily Transubstantiate Grass and Water into their own Flesh and Blood : And Man does Transubstantiate the very Elements of Bread and Wine into his own Flesh and Blood : This undenyable Truth

Truth then should induce the *Test-League* to allow God a little more Power : And since he shews them the multiplication of all growing Bodies in their Seed, they cannot deny him a Fertile Power over his own Body : For since the Holy Ghost Breathed Christs Body into the Womb of a Virgin, Christ being God and Man, cannot be denyed the same Power to Breath the Breath of Life into Bread, by his own or his Delegates Words. And for Flesh to lye hid under the outward Figure of Bread, is no more impossible, then for the hidden Flesh of all Birds with their entire Forms, to be conceal'd under the Shape, Taste and Complexion of Eggs. We must then believe God of such Infinite Power, as to Create all things out of nothing by his Word ; which is the greatest and most visible of all Miracles : For (besides the proofs in *Genesis*) we daily view the Universe, which could never make it self in such Beauty and Order, without an Infinitely Powerful Designer.

And that Christ did Delegate his Power in the Sacrament to his Disciples, is plain in the Text above-mention'd of St. *Luke* Chap. 22. ver. 9. *This do in remembrance of me.*

If then we have so many Texts for *Transubstantiation*, and none against it : And the second Council of *Nice* with others, declaring for it, and none against it : These are not Authorities to be oppos'd by an Antient Father or too, as our Adversaries say, or a little late grown Reformed Church or two.

For the opposers of Gods Word condemn their own Principle of Reformation ; and Contradictors of General Councils, are underminers of all Christian Authority or Unity ; for they are the chosen Representatives of the Generality of Christians. Amongst whom, Peaceably call'd by the chief Power for many hundreds of years, the Church of God must be : To which Christ Promis'd to continue with, St. *Matthew* Chap. 28. ver. 20. in these words, *Loe I am with you always, even unto the end of the World.* And if so, all Peaceable General Councils must be of like Authority : And they who will not hear them, must incur the Penalty denounced in St. *Matthew* Chap. 18. ver. 17, 18. *And if he neglect to hear thee, tell it unto the Church ; and if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an Heathen, man and a Publican.*

Verse 18. *Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven. And whatsoever ye shall loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven.*

And the Church that we must hear, must be always Visible (if Christ be always with them) or else it can neither command, nor we hear them to Obey.

And without an Umpire Church we can never agree about the Sacrament ; nor any other of the many Controverted Texts, and *Sects* growing from them.

And now I believe this may be enough, though you still doubt *Transubstantiation*, to make you think it your Duty to endeavour to Repeal these *Test-Acts* ; to remove such a Bait for Division between His Majesty and People.

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As for the *Declaration* in the second *Test-Act*, Of *Idolatry* for *Invoking the Virgin Mary or Saints, or Adoring Christ in the Elevated Bread of the Mals*, Where they suppose he is not: I shall, in brief, only say, That the seeking of Christ either by or without his mediating Favourites, though it should be, where he is suppos'd not to be,) can be no *Idolatry*, Since Christ is every where, as he is God; and that no *Pagan Gods* are in the Hearts of any *Christians*.

And now having prov'd the unlawfulness, I shall proceed to the Inconveniencies of the *Test-Acts*.

And what can be more improper, then depriving the Government, not only of the use of the *Roman Catholics* in all Chargeable, Troublesome, or Dangerous Offices, either Civil or Military; but even of all other Subjects, who may avoid such Employments, by saying, I cannot take the Engagements in the *Test-Acts*, and therefore must not obey you.

How ridiculous were any Government, that should not have a Power to suspend such Laws?

As for the *Penal Laws* against *Non-conformists*, they were made to wear out the Opposers of Queen *Elizabeths* Title to the Crown; But that Cause being remov'd long since, it is certain that they have been contrary to the Primitive Doctrine and Practice of *Christians*, Oppressive of mens Consciences and Families, the Caulers of Conspiracies and Rebellions, and drivers of men to *Hypocrisy*.

If these then are their undeniable Attributes, your Compassion, Justice and true *Protestant* Interest, will Engage you to endeavour when you Sit again, to get the start of all your Enemies, in obliging His most Illustrious Majesty, by taking off altogether the worst of Slaveryes, at least from the most Loyal of His Oppressed Subjects.

They are but a Contemptible Handful of People. And therefore when God shall remove His glorious Majesty; if you shall then find them worse then other Subjects, you will be numerous enough to make what new Laws you please against them: For they are not the twentieth man, and have grown no faster here in this short time of Liberty, than a great Body of them hath done amongst the Wise United *Netherlanders* with a hundred years Liberty; where they are in Peace, with a continued Fidelity to their Government, when Invaded by the *French* of their own Religion.

But let what will happen, it is the True Interest of the *Church of England* to stand or fall with its Duty; Their King (if he were a *Heathen*) is the Lords Anointed; as *Cyrus* was call'd in *Isaiah* chap. 45. v. 1. and he is the Legal Head of the *English Church*, by which he can model them to their Duty without force.

And now I have said enough, to one so Wise as to know, that God and the King must be Trusted with something, For I should Apologize for so tedious a Letter from

Your very Affectionate and
most Humble Servant.